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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #3570-83
17 May 1983MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THRU : National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

FROM :
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

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SUBJECT : Some Additional Thoughts for the 18 May NSC
Meeting on MBFR

1. MBFR has always been more of a struggle for political advantage than anything else. While both sides have maneuvered to obtain an agreement militarily favorable to them, they have taken great pains not to be seen as impeding progress and have simultaneously used the negotiations to bolster their posture in other arenas. Thus, for the last few years, the two sides have simultaneously tried to fashion an agreement to their liking and used the data issue to blame the other for the lack of progress: The US by charging that the USSR is refusing to budge on data and the USSR by claiming that the US has created an artificial data dispute to block an agreement on reductions. So far the US has managed the negotiations adroitly enough to maintain the political leadership of the talks within NATO and to convince Western publics of the correctness of its position.

2. In essence, the NSC meeting will discuss how the US can best maintain this advantageous position both vis-a-vis the Soviets and within NATO. This is particularly important to us right now as we try to keep the West united on INF, the stalemated CSCE follow-up conference, and the prospective Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE). Viewed from this perspective, the five options developed for the NSC can be characterized as follows:

- Option 1 assumes that we can maintain our advantage by stressing Eastern intransigence on data.
- Option 2 moves slightly beyond this by having Western negotiators explore more aggressively Eastern willingness to accept effective verification.

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- Option 3, 4 and 5 assume we must become more active in order to maintain our current advantage. Option 3 does this by shifting the Vienna discussions to actual reductions while postponing the data issue. Options 4 and 5 shift the focus to initial, verifiable US-Soviet reductions, with Option 5 being bolder in that it consists of a comprehensive package whose most important component is Soviet acceptance of the entire Western associated measures package (tabled in Vienna in 1979).

3. The Intelligence Briefing Memorandum (dated 13 May 1983, Subject: NSC Meeting on MBFR, 17 May 1983) correctly points out 1) that Options 4 and 5 are partially intended to let the Soviets slide off the data hook by surreptitiously reducing the Warsaw Pact forces over the next 12 months; and 2) that such a surreptitious drawdown would be well nigh impossible for intelligence to monitor on anything approaching a real-time basis. I share the view expressed at our meeting that the Soviets are not likely to make that drawdown and therefore believe that the Intelligence Community will not have to monitor such a surreptitious thinning out of the Warsaw Pact Forces. Consequently, I see the choice within these five options as hinging more on perceptions of what must be done to maintain the propaganda advantage than on the implications for the Intelligence Community.

4. In making that judgment on the options we should keep in mind an additional ploy the Soviets may well try before the end of a year: A publicly announced unilateral withdrawal of some 20,000 men as a goodwill gesture. Moscow did just this in 1979: Brezhnev announced a 20,000 man withdrawal in an October speech and the Soviets subsequently did withdraw one tank division plus some other units. Since they were simultaneously adding combat elements to their 26 divisions remaining in the MBFR reduction area, we doubt whether they actually decreased their manpower at all. But we could not prove this. Fortunately, the Soviet propaganda campaign was not conducted well enough to torpedo NATO's December 1979 dual-track INF decision. Moscow's current insistence on the USSR and US setting the reduction example and the on-going reorganization of the Soviet Forces in East Germany may be the prelude to a repetition of their 1979 ploy, but this time with more effective orchestration of the propaganda. We have noted this possibility in the PDB and I recommend that you bring it to the attention of the NSC on 18 May.

5. If such a Soviet ploy is indeed a possibility, it becomes important that we be prepared to negate its intent, namely Moscow's desire to contrast its own alleged flexibility with US "intransigence." One way to do this would be to stress publicly the importance of verifying any reduction in the MBFR reduction area and the impossibility of accepting at face value any unilaterally announced, unverified drawdown or even one which is verified solely under ground rules established by one side. I say this because this time the Soviets may well invite observers to some withdrawal ceremonies at which units will march out flags flying and bands playing.

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6. Viewed in this context Options 4 and 5 become interesting since they both envisage actual movement toward reductions and Soviet acceptance of some mutually agreed-upon verification procedures. Option 5 is the boldest since it has the Soviets accept the entire Western associated measures package. Right now it appears that the policy community is split on these five options, with only Ambassador Abramowitz favoring Option 5. He is expected to attend the NSC.

7. Personally I can foresee that Option 2 could easily be adopted by the NSC because it gives the appearance of motion without actually moving away for the current USG position. But I believe that its artificiality is so manifest as to negate the intended show of flexibility. Option 5 does show much more flexibility while simultaneously asking the Soviets to accept an agreement which would increase our ability to monitor Warsaw Pact forces. It would therefore be my personal choice as long as it was perfectly clear that the Soviets must accept the Western associated measures package for the rest of the offer to be valid. The Soviets will most likely turn the offer down, mainly on the grounds that the Western associated measures are too intrusive, extend beyond the agreed MBFR reduction area by taking in parts of the USSR, and in any case must accompany and not precede reductions. But a Soviet refusal would put us in a position of accusing Moscow of obstructionism on both the data and associated measures issues. Additionally, we would have set the stage for negating any propaganda advantage Moscow might try to draw from an alleged unilateral force withdrawal.

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